PROCESS RECORD ASSIGNMENT

Process record assignments are an invitation for students to engage in a time-honored tradition in social work education. For years and years, social work field instructors have been assigning process records and students have responded by engaging in this dynamic thinking, writing, and feedback process. In our programs, students complete this assignment four (4) times over the course of the academic year.

These assignments are explicit in their focus on helping students develop a solid self-reflective practice. They enable students to look deeply and specifically at a single practice interaction by writing a verbatim recording of what was said and observational recording that coincides with that. Students provide their own comments about their work using the structured outline below.

Equally as important to the student writing is the field instructor and faculty field liaison feedback. Therefore, this assignment is clearly a process that values the generative and collaborative thinking that often (if not always) results in an increase in the quality of student work.

Please keep in mind that process records are not intended to become a part of a client’s record but rather part of the education record of the student. Because of this, preserving the confidentiality of the client(s) and other professionals involved in the recorded interaction is extremely important. Actual names or other identifying information must either be omitted or disguised.

Guidance for How to Complete the Assignment

1. Field instructors and students think together in their supervision meetings about the specific interaction to be recorded and why. Because we believe that all student interactions have “significance” to the student’s development, many kinds of recordings are possible - a client meeting that lasts a full hour, a 20-minute phone conversation, a complex family meeting, a community treatment team meeting, or even a supervisory session with a field instructor. The important thing to remember is that each interaction is chosen AHEAD OF TIME because of its anticipated significance to the learning of the particular student completing the assignment.

2. The student engages in the interaction agreed upon.

3. The student competes the verbatim recollection. Perhaps the single most important aspect of doing a process record is the immediacy with which the student actually records the interaction. It is for this reason that field instructors and students make a plan for private space and enough time immediately following the session so that the student may complete a thorough and “fresh” record. Without this preparation ahead of time, it is quite possible that the richness of the experience will be compromised.

4. The student goes back to the verbatim recollection and complete the more detailed process record, following the outline below.

5. The student gives the assignment to the field instructor and receives the written feedback within a week. The timing of this is very important and ideally is completed before the next scheduled supervisory meeting.

6. The student gives a copy of the process record WITH field instructor comments to the faculty field liaison so that the faculty field liaison may provide additional feedback.
Process Record Outline for Students

1. Contextual Information – Describe the setting and purpose of the interaction and your thoughts and feelings prior to it.

2. Verbatim Recollection – Describe all verbal and non-verbal interactions between you and the other person(s). This includes everything that was said (word for word) and visual observations of both your and the other person’s physical state and behaviors. Divide the paper into two columns and put the verbal recollections in the left column, and simultaneously write your non-verbal observations and thoughts in the right column. Please note that there is an accepted realization that students will not remember everything perfectly. Remembering everything is not necessarily the goal. We do not want students to be paralyzed by trying to remember every single detail. In fact, the things you do remember are just as interesting and what you don’t remember can be an important part of the conversation, as well.

3. Reflection – This is the “heart” of the process record. Give your account of “what was happening,” as well as your examination of your own biases, ethical issues, and practice skills used.

4. Next Steps – Describe the possible goals and methods for future work. Connect this with your reflections above.